

HAER
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GERHARD BREWERY
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
613 West Washington Street
Morris
Grundy County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-89

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

GEBHARD BREWERY
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

HAER No. IL-69

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Location: I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor
613 West Washington Street
Morris, Grundy County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.380380 N.4579180
Quad: Morris

Date of Construction: 1896-1900

Builder: Unknown

Present Owner: American Wick Company (Bottling Plant)
George S. (Brewery)

Present Use: Bottling Plant is abandoned; Brewery
used for manufacture of plastic gaskets.

Significance: The Gebhard Brewery (built 1896-1900)
was owned by one of the largest land-
holding families in Morris, Illinois,
and was a successful brewery and
bottling operation until prohibition.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was
designated a National Heritage Corridor
in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER
embarked on an extensive inventory and
documentation project of the 100 mile-
long corridor. Field work for this
project was concluded in 1988. Final
editing of the documentation was
completed in 1992.

Historian: Gray Fitzsimons, 1985.

The Gebhard Brewery consists of the Brewing House and Warehouse Building and the Bottling Plant. The Brewing House and Warehouse Building was erected about 1896 with additions constructed over the next decade. The Brewing House section rises four stories in height and, like the rest of the building, contains a steel frame with common-bond brick walls. The Brewing House and Warehouse Building measures approximately 80' x 60'. None of the brewing equipment remains. The Bottling Plant was erected ca. 1900 and consists of a two-and-one-half-story brick building with an interior wood frame. The building measures approximately 60' x 30' and has a gable roof and a stone foundation.

Originally a one-and-one-half story brick building, the Gebhard Brewery, located on West Washington Street near Nettle Creek, was started in 1866 by Louis Gebhard. Gebhard's enterprise was successful, and by 1896 he had erected a large brick and steel building to replace the original building. The new building contained a large brewing room complete with a copper vat. Grain was prepared on the upper floors of the five-story brewing house. Less than ten years later a large brick and steel addition was built off the north facade of the brewing house. Another addition to the brewery, built at the same time, consisted of a two-and-one-half story brick and timber building which served as a bottling plant. William Gebhard succeeded his father in the business and used the wealth generated by the brewery to construct homes and commercial buildings in Morris. The Gebhard family eventually had the most extensive land holdings in the town.

With the advent of prohibition the brewery was closed. Most of the machinery was dismantled and sold abroad. After standing abandoned for a few years the brewing house was converted into a flour mill. First known as the Morris Milling Company and later as the Brown Mill, named after owner Dan H. Brown, this enterprise went through periods of activity and abandonment and was never entirely successful. In 1946 the Lindsey Light and Chemical Company purchased the old bottling plant and began to manufacture mantles for lanterns. Currently the building is owned by the American Wick Company, a firm that produce mantles. The old Gebhard Brewery is occupied by a small manufacturing concern involved in the production of gaskets.

SOURCES:

Sanborn Map Co., Morris, Illinois (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1894, 1907, 1927).